

What is claimed is:

sub B2  
A15  
1. A calcium fortified beverage composition consisting essentially of purified water and calcium sulfate.

sub  
A1  
2. The calcium fortified beverage composition according to claim 1, wherein the calcium sulfate is calcium sulfate dihydrate.

3. The calcium fortified beverage composition according to claim 1 which contains at least about 10% U.S. RDV of calcium per serving.

sub  
B3  
4. The calcium fortified beverage composition according to claim 1 further comprising one or more non-mineral nutritional supplements.

5. The calcium fortified beverage composition according to claim 4, wherein the non-mineral nutritional supplement is chosen from the group consisting of Vitamins A, D, E (tocopherol), C (ascorbic acid), B (thiamine), B<sub>2</sub> (riboflavin), B<sub>6</sub>, B<sub>12</sub>, and K, niacin, folic acid, biotin, and combinations thereof.

6. The calcium fortified beverage composition according to claim 1 further comprising a flavor component.

7. The calcium fortified beverage composition according to claim 6, wherein the flavor component is

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selected from fruit flavors, botanical flavors, and mixtures thereof.

Sub  
B4

8. The calcium fortified beverage composition according to claim 1 further comprising a preservative system.

9. The calcium fortified beverage composition according to claim 8, wherein the preservative system is selected from the group consisting of sodium benzoate, potassium benzoate, sodium sorbate, potassium sorbate, EDTA, BHA, BHT, TBHQ, dehydroacetic acid, dimethyldicarbonate, ethoxyquin, heptylparaben, and combinations thereof.

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B5  
A5

10. A method for producing a calcium fortified beverage composition comprising:

(a) combining a ready to drink beverage and calcium sulfate to form a solution; and

(b) preserving the solution to form the calcium fortified beverage composition.

Sub  
B5  
A5

11. The method according to claim 10, wherein the calcium sulfate is calcium sulfate dihydrate.

12. The method according to claim 10, wherein the amount of calcium sulfate combined with the ready to drink beverage in step (a) is an amount sufficient to provide at least about 10% of U.S. RDV of calcium per serving.

13. The method according to claim 10, further comprising the step of adding one or more non-mineral nutritional supplement(s) prior to step (b).

14. The method according to claim 13, wherein the one or more non-mineral nutritional supplement(s) is chosen from the group consisting of vitamins A, D, E (tocopherol), C (ascorbic acid), B (thiamine), B<sub>2</sub> (riboflavin), B<sub>6</sub>, B<sub>12</sub>, and K, niacin, folic acid, biotin, and combinations thereof.

15. The method according to claim 10, wherein step (b) comprises subjecting the solution to a pasteurization process.

16. The method according to claim 15 wherein the pasteurization process is chosen from the group consisting of hot-filling, aseptic packaging, ozonation, radiation, UV light, high pressure, membrane permeation, pulsed electric field, sonication, or combinations thereof.

17. The method according to claim 10, further comprising the step of adding one or more flavor component(s) prior to step (b).

18. The method according to claim 16, wherein the one or more flavor component(s) is chosen from the group consisting of fruit flavors, botanical flavors, and mixtures thereof.

19. The method according to claim 10, wherein the ready to drink beverage is purified water.

Sub A3  
B8  
~~20. A beverage composition consisting essentially of a nutritionally significant amount of calcium and purified water, wherein the beverage composition is produced by combining calcium sulfate and purified water to form a solution.~~

21. The beverage composition of claim 20 wherein calcium is present in an amount of at least about 10% U.S. RDV per serving.

22. The beverage composition of claim 20 further comprising one or more non-mineral nutritional supplement(s).

B  
23. The beverage composition of claim 20 further comprising a flavor component.

24. The beverage composition of claim 20 further comprising a preservative system.

Sub B9  
A4  
~~25. The beverage composition according to claim 20 wherein the calcium sulfate is calcium sulfate dihydrate.~~

26. The beverage composition according to claim 20, wherein the solution is further subjected to purification.

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27. A method for providing a nutritionally significant amount of calcium to a subject comprising administering to the subject the calcium fortified beverage composition of claim 1.

28. A method for providing a nutritionally significant amount of calcium to a subject comprising administering to the subject the beverage composition of claim 20.

29. A method of providing at least about 10% of the U.S. RDV of calcium to a subject comprising administering to the subject the calcium fortified beverage composition of claim 3.

30. A method of providing at least about 10% of the U.S. RDV of calcium to a subject comprising administering to the subject the beverage composition of claim 21.

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add